

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (Withdrawn - currently amended): A method of preventing or reducing the formation of gas hydrates in a liquid or a gas comprising adding, as a gas hydrate inhibitor, a solution or dispersion of ~~copolymers~~ a copolymer comprising from 40 to 99.5% by weight of at least one ethylenically unsaturated, cyclic lactam A, from 0.5 to 60% by weight of at least one C₄ to C₈ alkyl (meth)acrylate (monomer B) having a water solubility of less than 10 parts by weight of monomer in 100 parts by weight of water at 21°C, and

from 0 to 50% by weight of one or more other monomers C,

wherein the said percentages of said copolymer add up to 100%,

in a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C to said liquid or gas.

Claim 11 (Withdrawn - currently amended): The method according to claim 10, wherein the copolymer ~~is composed of~~ comprises from 60 to 99% by weight of lactam A, from 1 to 40% by weight of monomer B, and from 0 to 39% by weight of monomer C.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 10, wherein the proportion of the monomers C is less than 5% by weight.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 10, wherein the lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 10, wherein the copolymer is prepared by solution polymerization in a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 10, wherein the copolymer has a K value of from 10 to 100, measured in 5% by weight ethanol solution at 21°C.

Claim 16 (Canceled).

Claim 17 (Withdrawn - currently amended): The ~~process~~ method according to claim 10, wherein the liquid or gas is mineral oil or natural gas.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): A solution of ~~copolymers~~ comprising a copolymer which has a K value of from 10 to 45 in 5% by weight ethanol solution at 21°C comprising, from 40 to 99.5% by weight of at least one ethylenically unsaturated, cyclic lactam A, from 0.5 to 60% by weight of at least one C₄ to C₈ alkyl (meth)acrylate (monomer B) having a water solubility of less than 10 parts by weight of monomer in 100 parts by weight of water at 21°C, and

from 0 to 50% by weight of one or more other monomers C, but excluding acrylic acid,

wherein the said percentages of said copolymer add up to 100%,
in a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C.

Claim 19 (Canceled).

Claim 20 (Withdrawn): The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein monomer B is selected from the group consisting of n-butyl-acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate and mixtures thereof.

Claim 21 (Withdrawn): The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein monomer C is selected from the group consisting of hydroxy(meth)acrylates, (meth)acrylamide, (meth)acrylonitrile, (meth)acrylic acid or salts thereof, acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salts thereof and mixtures thereof.

Claims 22-25 (Canceled).

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein monomer B is selected from the group consisting of n-butyl-acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate and mixtures thereof.

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein monomer C is selected from the group consisting of hydroxy(meth)acrylates, (meth)acrylamide, (meth)acrylonitrile, ~~(meth)acrylic~~ methacrylic acid or salts thereof, acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salts thereof and mixtures thereof.

Claim 28 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 10, wherein the solvent is ethylene glycol.

Claim 29 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 10, wherein the solvent has a flash point greater than 100°C.

Claim 30 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 29, wherein the solvent is 1,2-ethanediol or 1,2-propanediol.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein the solvent is ethylene glycol.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein the solvent has a flash point greater than 100°C.

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 32, wherein the solvent is 1,2-ethanediol or 1,2-propanediol.

Claim 34 (Withdrawn): The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 26, wherein the lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claims 36-39 (Canceled).

Claim 40 (Withdrawn - currently amended): The method as claimed in claim [[39]] 10, wherein the cyclic lactam is N-vinylcaprolactam or ~~N-vinylpyrrolidone~~.

Claims 41-44 (Canceled).

Claim 45 (Currently Amended): The solution as claimed in claim [[44]] 18, wherein the cyclic lactam is N-vinylcaprolactam or N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 46 (New): A solution comprising a copolymer which has a K value of from 10 to 45 in 5% by weight ethanol solution at 21°C comprising,

from 40 to 99.5% by weight of at least one ethylenically unsaturated, cyclic lactam A,

from 0.5 to 60% by weight of at least one C₄ to C₈ alkyl (meth)acrylate (monomer B)

having a water solubility of less than 10 parts by weight of monomer in 100 parts by weight of water at 21°C, and

from 0 to 10% by weight of one or more other monomers C,

wherein the said percentages of said copolymer add up to 100%,

in a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C.

Claim 47 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 46, containing 0% by weight of monomer C.

Claim 48 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein the cyclic lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.